



## Department of Health

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

December 24, 2020

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update**

Dear Resident / Representative:

As we begin the holiday weekend, we want to bring you up to date on the current situation the Veterans Home. We are grateful to all of our families for your perseverance and strength throughout 2020.

The Veterans Home's efforts continue as we do all we can to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The safety and wellbeing of all residents is our top priority. The Infection Prevention and Control Committee continues to meet as necessary to review and act on guidance from the federal and state governments and work closely with health department contacts. Over the past week we have been in constant contact via telephone and on-site with the NYS Department of Health and the epidemiologists.

A total of sixty-three residents have tested positive since testing started, and eighty-four employees have tested positive since testing became readily available. Unfortunately, we are grieving over the loss of six residents who have recently passed away with COVID. The entire Veterans Home family mourns the loss of each resident, including those veterans from the "Greatest Generation." The veterans' sacrifice of military service reminds us why we live in the greatest democracy in the world. Like all of our veterans here at the Veterans Home, we never take for granted all that they have done for us during their lifetime.

We are currently conducting facility-wide resident testing every 3-7 days until there are 14 consecutive days of no positive resident or employee test results. Residents with symptoms will continue to be tested for the coronavirus, as well as those residents who must be tested prior to a hospital appointment or procedure. In accordance with state and federal requirements, we have begun to test staff twice weekly. This will continue until such time that the community positivity rates decrease.

Accordingly, the residential units are on quarantine with a higher level of precautions. These precautions include requiring residents to remain on the unit, and in their rooms whenever possible. In addition, face-to-face visits continue to be paused. As we get closer to the date for resuming face-to-face visits, you will be notified in writing as well as telephone.

The Veterans Home is preparing for the receipt of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for residents and staff. We are extremely optimistic about the vaccine. Pfizer has indicated that their vaccine has an efficacy of 95% that will mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the safety and well-being of our frail elderly veteran population. Every vaccine administered brings us a step closer to families finally reuniting in-person with their loved ones! The Home has partnered with CVS Pharmacy to obtain and administer the vaccine. The COVID vaccination days are scheduled for 12/27/20, 1/17/21 and a 3<sup>rd</sup> date to be scheduled. If you have not already done so, please return your vaccination consent form.

We encourage you to communicate with your loved one via virtual methods such as FaceTime. Please call ahead and speak with the Social Work staff at (585) 345-2051. All visits must be confirmed by the staff prior to visitation.

We recognize that Christmas may look and feel different this year as we continue to endure this unprecedented public health event. Please know how honored we are to care for your loved one. With the vaccine at our doorstep, we hope that we are now a day closer to returning to normal.

We wish all our residents, families and friends who celebrate Christmas much happiness and hope. Wishing everyone good health and joy and may your life be filled with warmth and good cheer throughout the New Year.

Please know we remain available to assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

*Nicole M. Gallagher*

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